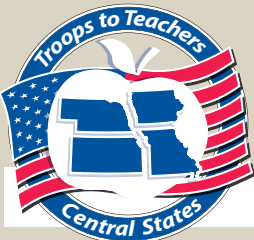


# Troops to Teachers



## Interviewing and Marketing Yourself



So, you've gone and done it. You have decided that you want to shape minds, make the world a better place and become a teacher. Great choice!! Congratulations.

You have gotten your certificate, you have student teaching in the bag and now you need to get a job.

So, how do you prepare for the interview process and market yourself? Why would a school want to hire a veteran? Well, when a child asks a 22 yr old first time teacher, "Oh man, why do I have to learn Physics?" They get an answer about curriculum and graduation requirements. When you ask a former ICBM officer or a former artillery officer, there is a whole different level of engagement and importance that can be shared.



### Why Hire a TTT Candidate?

A prior long-serving military member has these qualities:

- MATURITY
- COMMITMENT
- DIVERSITY
- PROVEN TEAM MEMBER
- ALWAYS PREPARED FOR LESSONS
- CARING TEACHER
- DEDICATION
- LOYALTY
- CREATIVE THINKER
- UNMATCHED WORK ETHIC

- ✦ **MATURITY.** TTT participants have learned many lessons about human relations, stress management, priority setting, leadership and sacrifice that can only be gained through experience. Most TTT participants are in their early forties. This maturity is available to the students for decades to come, while the cost to the district is equivalent to hiring a recent young college graduate.

#### DON'T FORGET OUR FUTURE OFFICERS - JROTC

The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is in high schools across the United States. The purpose of JROTC is "to instill in high school students the values of citizenship, service to the US, personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment."

Contact the Troops to Teachers office or your service organization to get more information.

Navy: [www.njrotc.navy.mil](http://www.njrotc.navy.mil)

Marine Corp: [mcjrotc.org/group.aspx](http://mcjrotc.org/group.aspx)

US Army: [www.usarmyjrotc.com/jrotc/dt](http://www.usarmyjrotc.com/jrotc/dt)

US Air Force:

[www.afoats.af.mil/AFJROTC/FAQ.asp](http://www.afoats.af.mil/AFJROTC/FAQ.asp)

- ♦ **COMMITMENT.** The retention of TTT participants far exceeds the average teacher. This longer retention is evidence of the commitment of TTT participants to the children, school and administration and the TTT participant's decision to make teaching a professional career choice.
- ♦ **DIVERSITY.** When serving in the military you work in an extremely diverse community. Military members learn very quickly to be sensitive to other cultures, backgrounds and beliefs. Moreover, a "troop" learns very quickly that what really matters is whether a teammate can produce under pressure when needed and not that teammate's race, ethnicity, religion, or beliefs.
- ♦ **PROVEN TEAM MEMBER.** All military experience demands that each individual work for the good of the team and not of the self.
- ♦ **ALWAYS PREPARED FOR LESSONS.** An axiom of military operations is that you must always be prepared and have a good plan prior to starting. TTT participants never enter a classroom unprepared and try to "wing it."
- ♦ **CARING TEACHER.** In the military, a leader leads 24/7. The responsibility and caring of each individual "troop" are felt every day of the week. This same caring is evident in TTT participants and in the deep concern they feel for the children in their class.
- ♦ **DEDICATION.** No one serves a career in the military for the pay—no one really works just for a paycheck. There is not enough money in the world to pay someone to do what is sometimes asked of our service members. However, they do it willingly because of an intense level of dedication. This same level is transferred to helping children.
- ♦ **LOYALTY.** Service members have operated in a large bureaucracy and know that only through loyalty to the process and their leaders will the right things get done. TTT members support principals and their authority.
- ♦ **CREATIVE THINKER.** Contrary to the misconceptions often portrayed in the media, a successful military career requires a service member to constantly be looking for a better way to do things. It is no accident that the military has always been on the leading edge of development in technology and personnel issues.
- ♦ **UNMATCHED WORK ETHIC.** The military has never been a 9 to 5 job. This strong work ethic that was developed to be successful in a military career has earned most TTT participants the reputation as the first to arrive and the last to leave at their schools.

## Interviewing for a Teaching position?

Common questions and answers.

### Question 1 – What are your thoughts on team teaching?

Many of you have probably participated in team teaching and realize the benefits of this strategy. The interviewer who asks this question wants to discover if you are flexible, enjoy working in a team environment, have experience in this area, and what your viewpoints are on the subject.

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It is always wise to speak about some of the positive aspects of team-teaching, such as: “It is an effective strategy for teaching large groups of students. It encourages teachers to collaborate and generate ideas – two heads are always better than one!”

Talk about team-teaching experiences you have had, and the positive results that transpired.

If you haven't had any hands-on experience, you may explain that you enjoy working in a team setting and are excited about the possibility of participating in this approach. Or, maybe you have done some reading on the subject and can share some of the insights you gained with the interviewer. This will definitely be impressive!

Furthermore, it is vitally important to be honest when answering all questions during the interview. Organizing your thoughts in advance will serve to help you deliver truthful and concise responses, while highlighting the skills you possess that are most compatible with the needs of the school or district.

### **Question 2 – What are your greatest strengths?**

This question will probably be asked. Now, if you researched the district/school and found out what they are looking for in a candidate, you will be able to focus your response on that information, keeping in mind it is important to tell the truth. With every response you must show your value to the district. This will also give them an idea of how you view your talents and skills as a teacher. Perception is critical. You must be able to confidently discuss your skills using a convincing approach. It is important the answer shows your hard/tangible skills. For example, classroom management, curriculum development, or technology integration. These skills will show the interviewer(s) what you can do on the job. Don't stop there, you will set yourself apart from the pack if you can back up your claims with actual stories. This will build credibility, and it shows you really are good at what you are claiming. Tell them about what you have done to incorporate technology into the classroom and what was the result. The result part of the story sells value, and that produces job offers.

### **Question 3 – What is your biggest weakness?**

Your response could include something that may have been a challenge in the past, which you have taken steps to rectify. It is important to be truthful, they will be testing your honesty. In addition, they will be checking to see if you provide a weakness that is critical to success in the position. For example, the interview will likely end quickly if you answer you have a difficult time managing the classroom. The key to answering the question is to turn a negative into a positive. I don't suggest using the traditional statement, “I'm a perfectionist.” It is often overused and will tend to sound phony. It is important you don't get defensive and try to justify why you are weak in a particular subject area, such as social studies. This would make a bad impression, because it may be relevant to the position that you are seeking. Whatever you decide to use, ensure it is not one of the key skills of the position you are seeking. In other words, don't pinpoint classroom discipline and/ management or subject area if you are seeking a teaching position. Think of this question as an opportunity to sell yourself. Here is an example: You wouldn't say, “I have a difficult time organizing my day.” Instead, rephrase the answer by saying, “There are so many creative activities I plan for my students

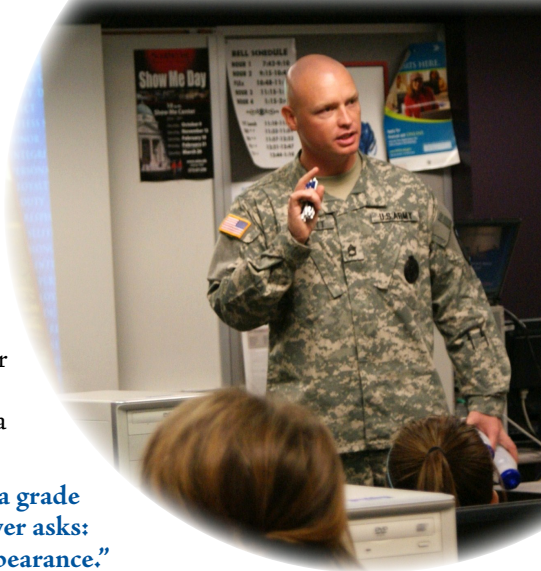
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and class time is limited. It is difficult to incorporate all of the activities that I would like my students to learn from. Over time, I have realized to prioritize what lessons are the most important to enhance my student learning. I now realize that I can't do everything I would like to." This example shows you are excited about designing new and creative lessons for your students. In their mind, this will not be a negative. It will position you that much closer to getting a job offer.

**Question 4 – Imagine an interview for a grade one teaching position and the interviewer asks: "Describe your classroom's physical appearance."**

Having prepared ahead of time, you understand the interviewer's attempt to determine: • Your teaching style • Your ability to effectively manage the class • The level and quality of student interaction • Your teaching philosophy within this context, you might respond: "Upon entering my classroom you will find a lively and colorful room completely centered upon children and active learning. Sight words, the alphabet, numbers, and inspirational quotes cover the walls while large bulletin boards display students' work. A large area contains a carpeted reading or group corner specifically for storytelling, show-and-tell, weather discussions, and calendar and day-of-the-week conversations. This classroom includes an abundance of age-appropriate reading materials and student mailboxes where children place personal journals, home reading books and workbooks in the morning and then collect newsletters or other parent communication at the end of the day." Note: Presenting floor plans successfully used in the past demonstrates strong organization and preparation skills. Indicate various potential seating plans used throughout the year and offer pictures of your old classrooms as a way to provide the principal and interviewing board a first-hand view of your potential classroom. As the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Remember, each person's answer will vary depending upon teaching style and philosophy. The district representatives will look to see if your style is compatible with their needs. Thoroughly researching each specific district needs will allow you to tailor your answers, which is the key to a successful interview. *Excerpted from Eight Popular Interview Questions & Answers, [www.teacherofcolor.com](http://www.teacherofcolor.com).*



## Interviewing For a Teaching Job

by Dr. Bob Kizlik

([www.adprima.com/interview.htm](http://www.adprima.com/interview.htm)) Reprinted with permission.

*Note: Dr. Kizlik has been a university professor, resource teacher, classroom teacher, curriculum writer and university coordinator. He entered education after an enlistment in the Army in the 1960s. "Upon reflection, some of the best teachers I ever encountered were noncommissioned officers in various training programs," Dr. Kizlik said.*

Your first interview for a teaching position is scheduled. More than likely, you're a little scared, but you've been looking forward to this for a long time and the big day is here at last! The payoff for all your hard work in college is finally in sight. It's what you have been anticipating for weeks, and yet you're tense, and perhaps even apprehensive.

You've heard from fellow classmates and friends that the first job interview for a teaching position can often be a stressful experience, made even more so when teaching jobs are scarce, especially in tough economic times. Teachers who have been there and done that will generally tell you that being as perfectly prepared as possible beforehand is the best policy. With that in mind, and given that you should get at least six hours of sleep the night before the interview, the following suggestions are offered:

**1. Dress.** Dress appropriately. Your choice of clothing tells a lot about you, and as they say, you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression. Women should dress tastefully. That means no shorts, halters, cutoffs, miniskirts, etc. You want to look professional. If you have visible body parts other than your ears that are pierced, remove the objects before the interview. Also, if you have tattoos, do your best to cover them with appropriate clothing. Men should wear a nice pair of pants and shirt and tie. Polished shoes are a good idea and say a lot about you. Don't wear sneakers, and be careful about jeans. The body piercing and tattoo advice goes for men, also.

**2. Speech.** Many times interviews that are otherwise excellent crash and burn because the interviewees mispronounce words, speak much too fast, and use expressions such as "like" as a form of punctuation. A big mispronunciation problem involves words that begin with "pre" or "pro." They are often pronounced as if they began with "per." For example, "prescribe" is pronounced "PREscribe" not "PERscribe." If you have this problem, work on it. As for like, well, like don't use it as a form of punctuation!

**3. Portfolio.** Document any work you've done with children, or in teaching, even if it's not a similar population or age range. Make sure the portfolio is not overly complicated. That means it's easy to read and understand. Organization is everything. Also, make sure you have carefully checked all spelling and grammar. An alternative is to bring an "electronic portfolio" such as a flash drive, CD, or DVD with you and let the interviewer know it is available. There are also many online resources that allow people to post resumes, vitas or portfolios.

**4. Technology.** Bring appropriate samples of your technology skills – graphics design, presentation software, word processing, etc. Let the interviewer know you have them, and do not offer to show them unless asked to do so. Flash drives make it possible to bring a lot of material with you in digital form in a case no larger than a pack of gum.

**5. Territory.** Know the setting you're going to. In many districts, each school has a model, and it is very important to show understanding of the model. Usually, this type of information is available on the district or school website. Make sure that you don't go into a "back to basics-type" school spouting everything you heard in college about whole language. If you can, do research on the instructional setting, principles and goals of the school. In other words, do your homework!

**6. Money.** Don't be stupid. Remember, the principal or other interviewer does not negotiate salary, benefits, etc. Don't even mention them in the interview. If you do, the interviewer may "write you off." This is especially true in the current economic situation, where many school systems are cutting back or not hiring at all.

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**7. Philosophy.** Have defined, and be able to defend, your philosophy of education. Too often, education majors memorize buzz words, clichés and so-called wise sayings they picked up in their programs. Any experienced administrator will see through this in a heartbeat. Know what you believe and why you believe as you do. If you're unsure, practice out loud and have someone give you feedback. However, if not asked by the interviewer, it's usually a good idea not to offer it up for scrutiny.

**8. Mastery.** Be as current as possible on educational books and research, especially if you have an area of specialization. You should be able to explain in clear, unambiguous language why the content you would teach is important. You also have to convey a sense of mastery of the content, regardless of the level at which you are seeking a position.

**9. Management.** Have a discipline/classroom management system ready when you go for the interview. Know how it works, be able to explain it, why you've chosen it, and why you think it will be effective. If, for example, you believe in assertive discipline, be able to articulate why you believe it results in desirable outcomes.

**10. Odds and Ends.** Most principals look for teachers they believe will be effective in the classroom and be good team players. You must communicate to the interviewer that you can be both. The last thing a principal wants is a new teacher who will cause him headaches, need constant reassurance, take up his valuable time solving trivial problems, or who has poor parent-relation skills. In your interview, you must communicate to the principal that you will not cause him headaches, need constant reassurance, etc. It is a temperament thing, so learn how to read people, speak clearly and directly, don't be afraid to look the principal in the eyes, ask relevant questions, and thank him for the opportunity to be interviewed.

And one last thing: if your interview is in the morning, be sure to have at least a small breakfast not less than 90 minutes before the interview. Take it from one who knows; your brain will work better.

*Good luck with your interview, and may your career as a teacher be truly rewarding and fulfilling.*

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Our information and  
registration packet

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